



Thursday, January 01, 2004

USAREUR: returning troops won't be rushed back to work

By Rick Scavetta, Stars and Stripes

HEIDELBERG, Germany — Soldiers returning from Iraq and Afghanistan to bases in Europe won't turn wrenches for at least 45 days under a new U.S. Army Europe plan to reintegrate soldiers into family and garrison life.

For the first seven days back at home, returning soldiers will work half-days, followed by a month's vacation, USAREUR commander Gen. B.B. Bell said.

"I don't care about equipment or training," Bell told rear detachment commanders recently in Mannheim. "We are going to heal the warrior's spirit."

During the first week back, each soldier who participated in Operation Iraqi Freedom or Operation Enduring Freedom will undergo a series of tasks geared toward medical care and financial support. The half-day schedule also allows the Army to monitor troops during their first days back with family and friends.

Then, any troop who served a year deployed will get a month's leave. If a soldier served six months, he or she will get two weeks off, said Col. Eddie Stephens, a senior USAREUR personnel officer.

When troops get back from their time off, they enter the second 45-day phase of reintegration geared toward repairing their "personal kit," Bell said.

During that time, soldiers may have their records updated and undergo further medical care or counseling. It's also a time for them to straighten out their uniforms and gear.

"If I find you doing land navigation in the second 45 days, you're wrong," Bell told commanders in Mannheim.

Only after three months have passed will troops return to maintenance and training. Within 270 days, each returning unit will complete a field training exercise, according to USAREUR orders.

Bell seems prepared to back up his claim to give soldiers time to decompress.

During the Mannheim visit, he said he would "hunt down" and "nuke" commanders if he finds a returning soldier at the port or the motor pool.

'Horror stories'

Bell's staff is working from an Army wide plan to rebuild a combat unit's readiness within six months following an extended deployment, Stephens said.

The plan separates logistics, training and maintenance from the "human dimension," Stephens said -- a relatively new concept for the military.

"We don't want soldiers to get off the plane and think they're in San Francisco in 1970," Stephens said, referring to the poor reception many returning Vietnam veterans experienced. "Over the past 25 years, the Army has become more people-centric."

In fact, a general will greet each planeload of returning troops, followed by a brief ceremony welcoming them home, Stephens said.

After Desert Storm, Bell took command of a 24th Infantry

Division brigade returning from combat to Fort Stewart, Ga., he said. He remembers a sense of lost direction among dispirited soldiers enduring the stresses of returning home while trying to sort out battle-worn gear.

"It was just broken, and the family side was bad," Bell said. "I own those horror stories."

That experience has put Bell on a crusade to avoid the same mistakes.

Lessons learned

With V Corps and 1st Armored Division soldiers set to return home in the coming months, care providers are gearing up to provide the necessary support.

Medical professionals will begin troops' health assessments downrange to identify issues that may need further treatment, said Col. Allen Kraft, a senior USAREUR public health officer.

"We learned a lot of good lessons from Desert Storm," Kraft said.

While the Army knows about health threats such as malaria and leishmaniasis, there may be unknown hazards, Kraft said. Each troop will complete a health form, undergo medical screening and have blood drawn.

Army doctors then have tools to compare any health concerns that may manifest after the soldier's return, Kraft said. Troops will also have a tuberculosis skin test.

Informing soldiers and families about symptoms of illness are keys to treatment, Kraft said. The Army publishes pamphlets to highlight certain health problems and offer toll-free numbers for information.

Community chaplains also are getting ready to counsel soldiers when they return, said Chaplain (Lt. Col.) Eric Erkkinen. Their focus is on relationships with their self, family, unit and God, Erkkinen said. Most problems arise from trouble communicating, he said. Young soldiers with families are at highest risk.

"When soldiers come back, they have all sorts of memories and crises they're dealing with," Erkkinen said.

Should soldiers prefer not to have faith-oriented care, behavior health specialists are also on hand.

The Army, not unlike society in general, must work to "demystify and de-stigmatize" mental health care to be effective, said Lt. Col. Muriel Mosley, a social worker with 13 years' military experience.

Informing soldiers and families to identify those in need of treatment is essential, Mosley said. While she expects soldiers to have problems after serving a year in combat, she is optimistic that the community can help them heal, she said.

"It's an enormous undertaking," Mosley said. "But if we work as a family, it's doable."

The soldiers aren't the only ones receiving help. Army Community Service programs are preparing spouses in the form of reunion briefings, said Ricky Gibbons, who oversees community programs for the Army in Europe.

"The Army has come a long way since Desert Storm," Gibbons said. "We've made a quantum leap."

The Old Ironsides Report

January 1, 2004

News...

U.S. Boosts Security for New Year's Eve

NEW YORK (AP) - Revelers can expect hovering helicopters and bomb-sniffing dogs with their champagne and confetti as cities hunker down for their most heavily guarded New Year's Eve in memory. From Times Square to the Las Vegas Strip and California's Rose Parade, police were rolling out unprecedented security measures Wednesday, triggered by a hike in the national terrorism alert to orange, its second-highest level.

Gunfire Kills Two Protesters in Kirkuk

KIRKUK, Iraq (AP) - Gunfire erupted Wednesday as hundreds of Iraqis marched in protest over fears of Kurdish domination in the oil-rich northern city of Kirkuk. Police said two people were killed. Near the southern city of Basra, a South Korean was killed in an ambush and resulting gun battle between Romanian soldiers and Iraqi insurgents, South Korea's Yonhap news agency reported Wednesday. There was no immediate confirmation of the report or whether the victim was a soldier or a civilian.

Halliburton to Lose Iraq Oil Project

WASHINGTON (AP) - Just weeks after Pentagon auditors said Halliburton may have overcharged taxpayers to import oil to Iraq, the Defense Department is removing the Army Corps of Engineers from its role in supervising the program. The Defense Energy Support Center, which buys fuel for the military throughout the world, will supervise the shipments and choose new contractors to replace Halliburton, Vice President Dick Cheney's former company.

New Jobless Claims Lowest of Bush Tenure

WASHINGTON (AP) - New claims for jobless benefits fell last week to the lowest level in nearly three years, a sign that America's businesses are feeling more confident that the economic recovery is genuine. The Labor Department reported Wednesday that new applications filed for unemployment insurance dropped by a seasonally adjusted 15,000 to 339,000 for the week ending Dec. 27. Last week's drop marked the third week in a row that claims went down and left claims at their lowest level since Jan. 20, 2001 - President Bush's inauguration day.

Four Survivors Found in Iran Quake Rubble

BAM, Iran (AP) - Soldiers pulled four more people alive from the rubble of Iran's devastating earthquake, hours after rescue workers had all but given up hope of finding survivors and focused their efforts on relief and preventing disease. As the death toll from Friday's 6.6-magnitude quake reached at least 28,000, the discovery late Tuesday of two men and two women amazed health workers handling the aftermath of the disaster. Normally, people trapped under collapsed buildings can survive three days - a deadline that expired Monday morning.

Sports...

Ind. Man Sets Continuous Bowling Record

LEBANON, Ind. (AP) -- Gene Wethington's quest to bowl for the longest continuous stretch on record left his fingers swollen as he borrowed lighter balls and larger holes were drilled for him.

Wethington began on lane one at the Lebanon Bowling Center on Friday and kept at it until on Monday he reached the 52-hour, 15-minute mark recognized by the Guinness Book of Records.

As he reached the record, the 52-year-old Wethington raised both fists in the air to cheers from hundreds of family and friends.

Wethington said getting through the mental aspect of the challenge was more difficult than the physical. He even considered quitting.

"I kept asking myself why," he said. "My only answer was the love of the sport and the kids. I haven't had much in my life so it kept me going."

Wethington took on the bowling marathon as an effort to raise money for Boone County Special Olympics and the bowling center's junior bowlers league.

Wethington also credited much of the feat to his wife, an avid bowler herself, who only twice left the bowling alley in the city about 20 miles north of Indianapolis.

He only took 15-minute breaks every eight hours, during which time he used the restroom, relaxed in a chair for a rubdown and, because he has high blood pressure, had his blood pressure checked, but never slept.

The automotive worker, who says he bowls seven nights a week, had logged 270 games and knocked down 31,789 pins when he reached the record time. His best game was a 225, which came early. His worst game came when the right-hander bowled entirely left-handed to log a 48.

"He's got heart," said bowling buddy Thaddeus Beaty. "This is great for the city and this bowling center because we are trying to get it built back up. I didn't think he could do it, but he proved everyone wrong."

Chaplain's thought for the day...

Faith

Faith does not state that all things are good, but that things will work together for the good. This thing we face may be bad, but God will make it work until... good comes. - *Wade Hughes, Sr.*

We know that in everything God works for good with those who love him, who are called according to his purpose. Romans 8:28

The Old Ironsides Report

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myafn.net TV SCHEDULES: THURSDAY, JANUARY 01, 2004				As of: Wednesday, December 31, 2003 9:42:04 AM		
Start Time	SPORTS	ATLANTIC	SPECTRUM	PACIFIC	NEWS	Start Time
0		HEADLINE NEWS	CHER: THE FINAL TOUR			0
0.021		TONIGHT SHOW WITH JAY LENO			HEADLINE NEWS	0.021
0.042					LESTER HOLT LIVE	0.042
0.063		THE LATE SHOW WITH DAVID LETTERMAN				0.063
0.083			CELINE IN LAS VEGAS - OPENING NIGHT LIVE!	2003 ROSE PARADE ENCORE	HEADLINE NEWS	0.083
0.104		ACCESS HOLLYWOOD			NBC NIGHTLY NEWS	0.104
0.125	SPORTSCENTER	ESPNEWS	SNOW WHITE AND THE SEVEN DWARFS		ABC WORLD NEWS TONIGHT	0.125
0.146	NHL - ANAHEIM MIGHTY DUCKS @ CAROLINA HURRICANES	COLLEGE FOOTBALL - 2003 INDEPENDENCE BOWL: ARKANSAS VS MISSOURI			CBS EVENING NEWS	0.146
0.167				THE DR. PHIL SHOW	THE NEWSHOUR	0.167
0.188			DISNEY'S MICKEY MOUSEWORKS			0.188
0.208			DUMBO	THE OPRAH WINFREY SHOW	HANNITY & COLMES	0.208
0.25	ESPNEWS			NBC NIGHTLY NEWS	THE NEWS WITH BRIAN WILLIAMS	0.25
0.26			TARZAN			0.26
0.271	COLLEGE FOOTBALL - 2003 SAN FRANCISCO BOWL: COLORADO STATE VS BOSTON COLLEGE			JUDGE JUDY		0.271
0.292		HEADLINE NEWS		ACCESS HOLLYWOOD	CNN SPECIAL	0.292
0.309				GUIDING LIGHT		0.309
0.313		ESPNEWS				0.313
0.323			THE EMPEROR'S NEW GROOVE			0.323
0.333		HEADLINE NEWS				0.333
0.342				GENERAL HOSPITAL		0.342
0.354		HEADLINE NEWS			CNN SPECIAL	0.354
0.375		SESAME STREET		DISNEY'S 101 DALMATIONS : - CRUELLA WORLD		0.375
0.385			ROAD TO ELDORADO			0.385
0.396				HEY ARNOLDI : - MONKEY BUSINESS/ BIG CAESAR	CNN SPECIAL:	0.396
0.417	SPORTSCENTER	BEAR IN THE BIG BLUE HOUSE : - AFRAID NOT		POKEMON: JOHTO LEAGUE CHAMPIONS : - HASSLE IN THE CASTLE	PAULA ZAHN NOW	0.417
0.438		WHEEL OF FORTUNE		JACKIE CHAN ADVENTURES (TV-7): - JADE MONKEY		0.438
0.458	NFL TOTAL ACCESS	THE DR. PHIL SHOW	SNOW WHITE AND THE SEVEN DWARFS	JEOPARDY!	NIGHTLINE	0.458
0.479				HEADLINE NEWS	AIR FORCE TV NEWS	0.479
0.49		THE OPRAH WINFREY SHOW				0.49
0.5	NHL - ATLANTA THRASHERS @ DETROIT RED WINGS			ESPNEWS	HARDBALL WITH CHRIS MATTHEWS	0.5
0.521			DISNEY'S MICKEY MOUSEWORKS	HEADLINE NEWS		0.521
0.524		GUIDING LIGHT				0.524
0.542			DUMBO	REEL TIME	THE O'REILLY FACTOR	0.542
0.549				MISSION IMPOSSIBLE II		0.549
0.553		GENERAL HOSPITAL				0.553
0.583		HEADLINE NEWS			60 MINUTES II	0.583
0.594			TARZAN			0.594
0.604	SPORTSCENTER	JUDGE JUDY				0.604
0.625		TODAY			GOOD MORNING AMERICA	0.625
0.646	INSIDE THE NFL			WHOSE LINE IS IT ANYWAY?		0.646
0.656			THE EMPEROR'S NEW GROOVE			0.656
0.667				HEADLINE NEWS		0.667
0.688	SPORTSCENTER			TONIGHT SHOW WITH JAY LENO		0.688
0.708		DISNEY'S 101 DALMATIONS : - CRUELLA WORLD			HEADLINE NEWS	0.708
0.719			ROAD TO ELDORADO			0.719
0.729	COLLEGE GAMEDAY	HEY ARNOLDI : - MONKEY BUSINESS/ BIG CAESAR		THE LATE SHOW WITH DAVID LETTERMAN	ABC WORLD NEWS THIS MORNING	0.729
0.75		POKEMON: JOHTO LEAGUE CHAMPIONS : - HASSLE IN THE CASTLE			THE EARLY SHOW	0.75
0.771		JACKIE CHAN ADVENTURES (TV-7): - JADE MONKEY		ACCESS HOLLYWOOD		0.771
0.792	COLLEGE FOOTBALL - 2004 OUTBACK BOWL: FLORIDA VS IOWA	TOURNAMENT OF ROSES PARADE - LIVE	SNOW WHITE AND THE SEVEN DWARFS	BUFFY THE VAMPIRE SLAYER		0.792
0.833					FOX NEWS LIVE	0.833
0.854			DISNEY'S MICKEY MOUSEWORKS	COLLEGE FOOTBALL - 2004 GATOR BOWL: MARYLAND VS WEST VIRGINIA		0.854
0.875		COLLEGE FOOTBALL - 2004 CAPITOL ONE BOWL: GEORGIA VS PURDUE	DUMBO		60 MINUTES II	0.875
0.917					CNN SPECIAL	0.917
0.927			TARZAN			0.927
0.938	COLLEGE BASKETBALL - BIG XII: MARYLAND VS TEXAS TECH					0.938
0.958					CNN SPECIAL:	0.958
0.979					INSIDE POLITICS	0.979
0.99			THE EMPEROR'S NEW GROOVE			0.99

Today in history...

NEW YEAR'S DAY: JAN. 1, 45 B.C.

In 45 B.C., New Year's Day is celebrated on January 1 for the first time in history as the Julian calendar takes effect.

Soon after becoming Roman dictator, Julius Caesar decided that the traditional Roman calendar was in dire need of reform. Introduced around the seventh century B.C., the Roman calendar attempted to follow the lunar cycle but frequently fell out of phase with the seasons and had to be corrected. In addition, the pontifices, the Roman body charged with overseeing the calendar, often abused its authority by adding days to extend political terms or interfere with elections.

In designing his new calendar, Caesar enlisted the aid of Sosigenes, an Alexandrian astronomer, who advised him to do away with the lunar cycle entirely and follow the solar year, as did the Egyptians.

The year was calculated to be 365 and 1/4 days, and Caesar added 67 days to 45 B.C., making 46 B.C. begin on January 1, rather than in March. He also decreed that every four years a day be added to February, thus theoretically keeping his calendar from falling out of step. Shortly before his assassination in 44 B.C., he changed the name of the month Quintilis to Julius (July) after himself. Later, the month of Sextilis was renamed Augustus (August) after his successor.

Celebration of New Year's Day in January fell out of practice during the Middle Ages, and even those who strictly adhered to the Julian calendar did not observe the New Year exactly on January 1. The reason for the latter was that Caesar and Sosigenes failed to calculate the correct value for the solar year as 365.242199 days, not 365.25 days.

Thus, an 11-minute-a-year error added seven days by the year 1000, and 10 days by the mid-15th century.

The Roman church became aware of this problem, and in the 1570s Pope Gregory XIII commissioned Jesuit astronomer Christopher Clavius to come up with a new calendar. In 1582, the Gregorian calendar was implemented, omitting 10 days for that year and establishing the new rule that only one of every four centennial years should be a leap year.

Since then, people around the world have gathered en masse on January 1 to celebrate the precise arrival of the New Year.